THE STORY BROUGHT BY BRIGIT

By LADY GREGORY

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THE STORY BROUGHT BY BRIGIT

THE STORY BROUGHT BY BRIGIT: A PASSION PLAY IN THREE ACTS BY LADY GREGORY

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THE STORY BROUGHT BY BRIGIT

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CHARACTERS

JOEL - - *A Boy from the Mountains*
DANIEL - - - - *A Tramp*
MARCUS - - *A Sergeant of Pilate's Guard*
SILAS - *A Scribe in Caiaphas's Employment*
PILATE - - *The Roman Governor*
ST. JOHN
ST. BRIGIT
1ST WOMAN
2ND WOMAN
3RD WOMAN
1ST SOLDIER
2ND SOLDIER
3RD SOLDIER
A YOUNG SCRIBE
AN EGYPTIAN NURSE
THE MOTHER
THE CHRIST
A CROWD

At the first production of this play, in Dublin, the following note was printed on the programme :

Our tradition, and that of Gaelic Scotland, speak of St. Brigit as "the foster-mother of Christ," and I have been told by poor women of Slieve Echtge that she succoured both Blessed Mother and Child when they were brought here by a Heavenly Messenger for safety in Herod's time, and that she " kept an account of every drop of blood He lost through His lifetime." So it is not going very far from that tradition to suppose she may have been present at the end of His life as at the beginning, and have told the story in her own way, as she had seen it in the body or in vision.

THE STORY BROUGHT BY BRIGIT

ACT I.

Scene : Outside the Gate of Jerusalem. Before the curtain goes up voices are heard singing :

Bring every bough of the budding willow ;
Strew every branch on the stony street.
He that has made the stones his pillow
Ready the road before his feet !

As the curtain rises, the three Women are seen strewing green branches as they go off. Daniel is sitting at the Gate. Joel is looking down the road, shading his eyes with his hand.

Joel : I think the time will never come when I will see him !

Daniel : He should be near at hand. I could see the dust rising when I was on the height above. There would seem to be a great throng of people following after him.

Joel : He is worthy of it. The whole of the country is for him.

Daniel: Ah, it's easy gather a crowd. There are always fools knocking about that would follow after anyone's whistle.

Joel: They are no fools that follow after this man. They are saying up in the mountains it is himself has come to raise up the ruin of our people.

Daniel: I've seen them come and seen them go. A great cry at the beginning for anyone with a big voice, and its likely all turning against him at the latter end.

Joel: They will never turn against *him*. He is the leader we have been waiting for this long time. He will be our Prince and Captain, the same as Judas Maccabæus that rose up and fought for his nation.

Daniel: Little he'll lead you to that will be of any use.

Joel: Every use! To put out the Roman strangers and to take off their yoke. Haven't they enough of countries in their hand without coming ploughing through the sea for to meddle with our own?

Daniel: And what call has this man preaching on the road to go meddle with them?

Joel: (*coming nearer*) Where was his birthplace? Isn't it foretold in the prophecies? "But

thou Bethlehem, though thou be little among the thousands of Judea, yet out of thee shall come a ruler in Israel! He will deliver you from your enemies. He will go through them, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep!" To give us our freedom.

Daniel: Ah, freedom never put a penny in anyone's pocket. What is wanted is to do away with the rich, and to give their goods to the poor.

Joel: "Instead of a bondwoman our country will become a free woman!"

Daniel: Freedom how are you! The rich will be stiff and covetous, and the grabbers will grab all the same as at this day. But I'll give in that this Nazarene gave a good advice when he said, "If any man take away your coat let him have your cloak also." That hits at the wealthy ones that own a coat and a cloak along with it.

Joel: Maybe so. They are saying it is the moneyed people are keeping up the foreign Government.

Daniel: You would like to be listening to his talk, they were telling me, of the wealthy man that was sent to the flames of hell. That's the chat! Let him frighten them with fire to their heels till they'll divide with us the riches they own.

Joel: Ah, be quiet. You only want to grab for yourself. Little you care for the country or the nation.

Daniel: It is you rebels are destroying us with all your foolish talk. I don't know what put it in your head at all.

Joel: I heard rebellion talked ever and always and I a child, in the high mountains and on the low ground. Our country a ruin, our people scattered—

Daniel: Sure enough the country is in tatters. It is hardly worth begging around for your bite, let alone striving to find the price of a drink.

Joel: There can be no content until we send the foreign devils back to their own place in the North, or wherever Rome may be. They thinking it is crucifying the half of us will bring the rest of us kissing their hand. We'll put trembling in their heart yet!

Daniel: You'll put yourselves in jeopardy, that's sure enough. And you never will have strength to stand against them.

Joel: He that is in the prophecy, "a leader and commander of the people," will be well able to banish the whole drift of them.

(*The Women come back.*)

1st Woman: (*to Joel*) It will not be long now till you will see him. There was a sound brought upon the wind a while ago, like the noise of the little bees at their harvesting.

(*Brigit comes in from the gate. She wears a long cloak, and carries a staff. There is dust on her.*)

St. Brigit: God save all here!

The Women: God save you kindly.

St. Brigit: I am a stranger and astray in this place. All the people in the houses and in the streets are running to and fro, as if preparing for the marriage or the crowning of a king. I could get no answer from them, or no word.

1st Woman: You should be a stranger indeed, and not to know this is the day of preparation for the great feast of the Passover.

St. Brigit: I am come from the West, from the edge of the great ocean. I have crossed land and sea; I have seen many a rising and setting of the sun.

2nd Woman: Oh, wasn't the journey long on you!

St. Brigit: Winter came on me and the heat of summer, and winter again, till I hardly knew the seasons of the year, through the way they change according as I travel.

3rd Woman: It should be to look for some friend or some one of your kindred you are come?

St. Brigit: It was in a dream or a vision of the night I saw a Young Man having wounds on him. And I knew him to be One I had helped and had fostered, and he a Child in his mother's arms. And it was showed me in my dream there would trouble come on him, but in the end he would put gladness in the heart of His friends. And it was showed to me that the place where I would find him would be in this country of Judea, a long, long, way to the east.

2nd Woman: And was it in your own country you had fostered him?

St. Brigit: There came to my own country about thirty years ago a Young Woman that was seeking shelter and a hiding place for her Child. There was some wicked king looking for his life, some cruel man, one Herod.

Joel: That is it. A cruel man he was, and left a bad name after him.

1st Woman: It's likely enough he would have made away with the child. There was great talk of it at the time.

3rd Woman: And what way could a young child

and his mother go travel beyond the waves of the sea?

St. Brigit: It might be that an angel opened a path before them. A shining Messenger, and a Young Woman, and a Baby on her arm, and they so beautiful that all the people were crowding on them to see the beautiful people that were passing by.

2nd Woman: Thirty years ago. He should be a grown man now and in his bloom. Do you think could it be the Man we are waiting for to-day?

St. Brigit: It may be so, but up to this time it has failed me to get any tidings of that Mother and that Child.

Joel: It is he has power to free and to deliver his people. There will be a great welcome before him, and he coming into Jerusalem. You might hear the shouting a while ago, if you were outside of the city.

St. Brigit: I thought to find him in the House of God that is there, for surely God Himself had a hand in him. And so I went into the Temple.

Joel: You did not find him there.

St. Brigid: It had more the look of a fair or a market than of a place of prayer. Cattle and sheep

were in it, sellers and buyers, money-lenders calling out and cheating, barging and bargaining. No place for anyone that would come without money in the hand. So I left it and came away. It had not the appearance of the Gate of Heaven.

1st Woman: That is what our Master said a while ago—"My House should be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." And whatever it was then, it is seven times worse at this time of the preparation for the Feast.

3rd Woman: Sit down now and put off from you the weight of the journey, and you will see him when he comes to this place. (*Brigit sits down.*)

2nd Woman: He is coming nearer.

Joel: No, he has stopped again. There are people around Him in droves. They are pressing on Him. There is one brought in a bed.

1st Woman: They have brought him to our Lord for his healing. The shadows are beginning to lengthen, and they will never give him leave to pass the road.

3rd Woman: No doubt at all but he is a great Saint. I saw a lame man going to him on crutches, and after he had laid a hand on him he walked away cured, leaving the sticks after him.

1st Woman: There was a man that had the eyesight lost—stone dark he was—brought to him, and going away he was as well able to find his way as any other person. He is not like the scribes and Pharisees that don't care if you died on the side of the road.

3rd Woman: (*to Brigit*) Come hither where the road rises, and you might chance to get a sight of him.

St. Brigit: If I see him you are speaking of, and that he is the same I fostered, it is a great story I will have to bring back to the West. I always knew when I looked at that child that he had on him the blessing of Heaven.

(*She and the three Women go down the road.*)

Daniel (*who has been looking in at the gate*)*:* There are two I see coming have no good will, it is likely, towards that man that is walking the road.

Joel (*looking in at the gate*)*:* One of them would seem to be a Roman.

Daniel: He is Marcus, that is Sergeant of the Guard to Pilate the Governor, and that was reared in his house, and is the keeper of his secrets and his keys. Come here, out of their way. (*They move aside.*) The other is Silas, a very crabbed man of the sect of the Pharisees, that is a scribe in the pay

of Caiaphas, the High Priest, and that some give out is his spy. I see him going here and everywhere. Picking up news he is to bring his master. Come on now, I'd as lief get out of this.

(*As they go from the gate, Marcus, an old man in soldier's dress, comes on, followed quickly by Silas, who is middle-aged and fat.*)

Silas: A fine day, Marcus, to be taking the air outside the gate. There is too much of noise and of dust within in the city.

Marcus (*sitting down on the seat Daniel has left*): I was looking at the throng in the streets for a while, flocking about, having carcasses of beasts in their hands. An outlandish sort of a sight.

Silas: Making ready they are for the Passover.

Marcus: Pilate himself was taking a view of them for a while from the steps of his palace. He laid down it was as laughable a thing as ever he saw in a circus.

Silas: We'll get some ease from the cattle after this week. It is our great Feast of the year.

Marcus: I wonder you yourself would be free to come out here, and you in Caiaphas's household. Your mind should be running on the killing of the lambs for your big day.

Silas: That is not my work. I have plenty of time to go abroad in the air.

Marcus: You'd want it. Well, it's not altogether for pleasuring I am here myself, but to see what way is order kept, and nothing taking place that would annoy the over-Government. You yourself should be able to tell me that much.

Silas: (*looking round*) Don't be talking here. You wouldn't know who might be listening.

Marcus: Little I care what is heard of anything I have to say. The Roman Power is safe, whatever illwishers may do or think. What is this I am told about some new preacher or prophet that is risen up—one that they call the Nazarene?

Silas: That is the very one is now coming up the road. It is likely you were not without hearing that much within the Governor's house.

Marcus: I heard some talk that all your common people were cracked after him, and making much of him wherever he goes.

Silas: There are some without sense that will run after anyone that is new and would loosen the commands of the law. An ignorant man! Paying no respect to learning! Would make nothing of breaking the ten commandments. You'll see

Caiaphas will whip them in on the Feast days and bring them back to their duties.

Marcus: There were some complaints made to us. But we are not here to protect your Jewish law but our own.

Silas: That is where you make a great mistake. You have a right to join with us on the side of keeping law and order. This man is disorderly and a vagabond, a cause of all mischief, a rascally rambler of the roads. Owing no respect to the religion was laid down for us by Moses. It is that vexes my heart! Our religion is not like your own that is slipping like a wall where it wasn't built solid—with all your heathenish gods!

Marcus: There are some are saying this man you are running down is a messenger sent from your own Jewish God.

Silas: That is blasphemy. He that goes eating and drinking with a low class that do not so much as wash their hands!

Marcus: What have we to do with that? It is nothing that will bring our Government into danger.

Silas: To keep the people within the four corners of the law of Moses will check the coming in of this mischief, and will give strength to your hands as well as to our own.

Marcus: A good deal of your law could be broken without bringing any danger to the Empire of Rome.

Silas: (*angrily*) It's a danger to the whole world the way he is going on! Making little of Solomon's Temple, saying that God does not dwell in houses made with hands! Breaking the Sabbath the way he does! He goes so far as to do his cures on that day the same as any other day.

Marcus: No harm at all in that. I remember well that Sabbath day out in the villages when my own collar-bone was broken with the upsetting of the car upon the stones, and your Jewish doctor made an oath he would not put a hand to it until after the setting of the sun. We brought him to reason with a little prod of a sword. I laughed my fill, sore and all as I was, when he said it was forbidden by your law to so much as thread a needle on the Seventh Day. We paid him off, saying it was against our own law to give him any fee on the days that were under our own gods, and that was every day of the year!

Silas: You will maybe think worse of him upsetting the customs of the State under a colour of charity. That is his aim and drift. What he calls the law of love, that he preaches, would leave the

lawyers to starve, and the soldiers that idle they would run riot through the streets having no way to earn their pay! I don't like the way you are talking. To make little of what I am telling you is to make little of myself. If you have Pilate the Governor's ear, you have no right to be putting insults on my master's Scribe!

Marcus: That's the way with you. You are always calling out against the Roman Government, and the minute you have a quarrel with some one of your own people you come calling and craving for our help. Is it that he has an armed troop at his back?

Silas: He has not, but a poor sort—tax-gatherers, process servers, fisher boys. He has put some sort of a spell on them. Is it that class you wish to see get the upper hand?

Marcus: It is laid down that he bade them pay their tax to Cæsar.

Silas: If he did I'll go bail it was through cunning, the way your Romans would not meddle with him, but leave him to nourish war and sedition. I saw a lad here at the gate this very minute that I have information is a noted rebel in his talk. A heady youngster from the hillsides, sworn to free the country from your rule.

Marcus: Let him try that and welcome. Pilate is for policy and for patience. To tell the clean truth, a little Rising now and then is no harm at all. It gives us an excuse to get rid of disturbers and to bring more of our armies in. A Rising too is very apt to lead to splits, and splits are a great help when you want to keep a country down.

Silas: All right so. Let him stir up discontent and turn the head of the ignorant women and men that believe him to be a messenger from heaven.

Marcus: Be easy now. Pilate will keep an eye on him. He will do nothing to weaken your law, so long as it will help to keep the people quiet in his hand.

Silas: Here they are coming. No, it is but one of his faction I have my eye on, one Iscariot. A class of a man I am told that would be wishing to do well for himself.

(*Judas comes from the road.*)

Silas: Here now, what is this delay?

Judas: The people that are thronging him. He can hardly walk the road.

Silas: Stop a minute.

Judas: (*going on*) There is hurry on me.

Silas: I bade you come and see me this morning.

Judas: I made no promise.

(*The Women come back.*)

Silas: Your Master will blame you if you refuse a piece of money for the bag.

1st Woman: Indeed it is little our Master ever loses on himself.

2nd Woman: He is content with a wisp of rushes for his bed.

Silas: (*Flinging a piece of silver to Judas as he goes.*) It will fill someone's mouth anyway.

(*Judas takes it up and goes.*)

(*A great shout heard. People come on and stand at the roadside. St. Brigit with them and Joel.*)

1st Woman: Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord!

2nd Woman: Blessed be the Kingdom of our Father David!

Joel: Blessed is the King of Israel!

(*The Women strew more branches.*)

1st Woman: (*sings*)

O blossomed branch and O apple flower!
O sun in harvest, O blessed face!
O golden spear in the hand of power!
O harp that sounds in the Court of Grace!

Lift up the gates of the golden city,
Welcome the King of Glory in!
Mind without malice, heart of pity.
Lord that will master death and sin!

(*Christ appears. He is followed by St. John and a crowd. The Women stand aside.*)

1st Woman: May God enable you!

3rd Woman: All the luck in the world to you!

1st Woman: The blessing of the Sun and Moon upon you!

Joel: Surely his equal never walked on land or grass!

2nd Woman: God bless every hair of his head!

St. Brigit: Why would we not shout for him that is more than any earthly King!

Marcus (*to Silas*): He has a great gathering of people sure enough.

Silas: That I may live to see a bigger crowd gathered to see him made an end of!

Marcus: No doubt but he has got them in his hand.

(*The women and others kneel before Christ. He lifts his hand in blessing. Others press round Him.*)

Silas: What are they but fools that do not stand up and question him. Here now is a Scribe of our Court (*he takes the arm of a young man he has been whispering with*) who will stand up to him and will be well able to entangle him in his talk !

(*Silas pushes forward the young man.*)

Young Scribe: (*going up to Christ confidently*) Tell me now, which is the first commandment of all ?

Christ: The first of all the commandments is this : " The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength." This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely, " Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." There is none other commandment greater than these.

Young Scribe: (*as if abashed, and moving back a step*) Well, Master, thou hast said the truth, for there is one God and none other but He. And to love Him with all the heart and with all the understanding, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.

Christ: (*raising his hand to bless him*) Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God. (*The young man goes and kneels among his followers.*)

Marcus: (*to Silas*) You had best leave him alone unless you can do better yourself.

Silas: So I will do better. I'll question him—or anyway that follower of his that is his nearest friend. (*Goes to St. John.*) Tell me now why is it that Master of yours that is preaching against evil doers sits down to eat with publicans and sinners?

Christ: (*turning to look at him*) They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. Go and learn what this meaneth, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice, for I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance." (*Silas turns away muttering, but at a laugh from Marcus turns back again angrily.*)

Silas: Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders, not washing their hands?

Christ: Why do ye also transgress the counsel of God by your tradition? Ye hypocrites! Well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, "This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me!" Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of Heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Ye pay tithes

of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith ; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye bind heavy burdens and heavy to be borne and lay them on men's shoulders, but ye yourselves will not lift them with one of your fingers. (*Silas slinks away. Christ goes on towards the Gate, and stops for a moment outside it.*) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killeth the prophets and stonest them that are sent to thee ! How often would I have gathered thee to me as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and ye would not. If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace ! But now they are hid from thine eyes. Behold your house is left unto you desolate ! (*He goes in through the Gate. Silas takes up a stone to fling at him, but Brigit stops him.*)

St. Brigit: This is surely a man from beyond the world.

St. John: He is the Christ of God.

Silas: He is no better than a blasphemer, breaking through the commands of the law !

St. John: The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (*Goes on.*)

Joel: He is surely the man that will deliver

Israel. He is well fitted to be our King. He teaches with authority and not as do the Scribes.

(*They all follow him through the Gate, except Marcus and Silas.*)

Silas: He must be put down. If we let him alone there is not a man but will believe in him. You must give a hand to it. Where you made your mind up to take and to keep this country ye must take the burden of governing it.

Marcus: You have your own Courts and your Judges.

Silas: There is no satisfaction in that. He must be put down by Roman Law.

Marcus: You are making little of your own laws. I see no sense in that.

Silas: There is sense and good sense in it and good reason.

Marcus: Running down the Court of your own High Priest! You should be satisfied with that.

Silas: I can not be satisfied.

Marcus: It can judge and give sentence.

Silas: There is one thing it cannot give.

Marcus: What thing is that?

Silas: The penalty of death.

Marcus: He has done nothing worthy of death.

Silas: If we show you that he has, will you come to our aid?

Marcus: Well, I'm not saying but we might.

Silas: I'll hold you to that word.

Marcus: There's no hurry. You know well you cannot bring him before us while the city is given over to your Feast. There would be an uproar of the people. Wait till he'll do something out of the way.

Silas: He cannot be left at large misleading them as he is. He must be taken before the Feast will begin.

Marcus: It's best wait a while. Pilate himself will be glad to get a little reprieve on the Feast days, and not to be attending his Court.

Silas: There can be no delay. We must take him by craft. If we can but get someone to spy on him and get him in a snare when he is away from the throng. And here is the very one coming back I had in my mind——

Marcus: That surly fellow who was carrying the bag?

Silas: I was trying my hand on him yesterday. He is coveting a plot of land that has a price on it of thirty pieces of silver. I nearly had him gained, but he turned around in the finish and left me

there. That's the trouble in this country! Anyone that has the name of a disturber or a rebel is as safe among them as your Cæsar on his golden throne. There is no one will harm the smallest rib of his hair.

Marcus: Well, that is your own business.

Silas: Just leave me with him for two minutes of time. I could maybe come around him saying it will be best for his Master's own safety to keep him gaoled for a while, and out of reach of those fierce sects that will be coming through these days from the North.

Marcus: That'll do. I'll go on to the head of the road.

Silas: I'll be able to do it with a little coaxing and humouring.

(*Marcus goes as Judas comes on from the Gate, walking quickly.*)

Silas: (*catching hold of his arm*) Stop a minute!

Judas: Let go my arm!

Silas: What a hurry you are in. Are you forgetting what we were talking about yesterday—the price of that little field outside the walls.

Judas: (*shaking himself free and looking at him*) Was it *you* betrayed me?

Silas: What are you saying?

Judas: If it was I give you my word you'll be sorry for it.

Silas: There was nothing to betray.

Judas: What was it made my comrades put me out of their company? Giving hard looks at me—turning me back this very minute from the Temple gate. What way could they know I had lent an ear to you, and you asking me to whisper one little word as to where our Master would be in the night time?

Silas: If I did I made a good offer with it. A nice thing a little garden of land to have and to own. Money may be spent or be stolen, but the land cannot run away——

Judas: (*with a harsh laugh*) You are wasting all that talk! I'll take your silver and your job! There is a devil come into me since yesterday, and little I care where he'll lead me. If they turn their back on me I'll make them repent it! If they reproach me with being a thief I'll be worse again than a thief! That's it. Give me money in my hand! If I liked it well up to this it will be my darling from this out, and my weapon. I'll make them know I can bring down the whole of them in giving up their Master!

Silas: That's right. I was nearly in dread you had not that much courage.

Judas: I have courage! And I will face him, and will go up to him, and salute him, and betray him into your hand!

(*Shouting is heard inside the Gate.*)

Silas: Here is the money. Thirty pieces of silver. (*He gives it in a heavy leather purse.*)

Judas: Give it here to me! (*Turns to go.*) And I thought ere yesterday I never would go against him, but would be his wellwisher to the world's end! (*He goes off as Marcus returns.*)

Daniel: (*running out from the Gate, money clutched in his hand*) That's the way to serve them!

Silas: What has happened?

Joel: (*coming after him.*) It is begun and well begun!

Silas: Speak plain, can't you!

Joel: Those big men and those sons of pride in the Temple that are content to be under the foreigners and have struck no blow for freedom, he has brought down their pride!

Silas: What are you talking about?

Joel: He gave them a great overthrow! That's

how we'll see the Romans running before him in the same way!

Daniel: He made great havoc among them! Look at what I gathered on the ground—a full handful of copper and of silver—my grief that it is not gold! You never saw such a welter as was in it!

Joel: The day is not far off when the strangers will be stretched without anyone to cry after them! And we ourselves lighting a bonfire that will reach as high as the stars of heaven! (*Runs on.*)

Silas: (*to Daniel*) Where now did you steal that much?

Daniel: Would you call it stealing to pick up what was thrown down upon the floor? Would you wish golden coins to run into mouseholes, or down the steps into the street?

Silas: (*seizing him*) What are you raving about?

Daniel: Up the Nazarene! He was ever and always for the poor against the rich! Hadn't I the luck that I followed him inside the gate and as far as the Temple?

Silas: The Temple!

Daniel: In with him, and he had the traders cleared out of the place on the minute, before the crack of his whip!

Silas: He never dared do that much !

Daniel: That's my darling ! Cattle-dealers, money-lenders, merchants and moneyed people, the whole fleet of them, and he driving them before him with his scourge ! Bullocks having flesh piled up on them ! Heifers and horned cattle running to and fro ! Tables falling, stalls broken ; gold and silver rolling there and hither ! My grief I had not a bit of wax spread upon the sole of my shoe before I was driven out the door by the weight of the crowd.

Silas: What ailed him to go meddle with the stalls that are owned by Caiaphas ? He will go stark mad.

Daniel: I wouldn't miss for seven years of life the fun I had viewing the bankers, fat and frightened as they were, making their escape with their lives ! And the pigeons that are reared by Annas flying in their circles above in the high air, and his profits going with them into the clouds ! You couldn't but laugh seeing that. Wait till I'll go shout it down the road !

Silas: Get out of that ! (*Pushes him. He stumbles, and his handful of money is scattered.*)

Daniel: O you have my handful of silver scattered ! Wait till I'll gather it up !

Silas: (*pushing him on*) Get out of this. Look

now, go before me to the Chief Priest's house, and I'll put you in the way of a job will bring the double of that into your hand.

Daniel: I'd sooner have my own. My grief I didn't spend it and enjoy it in the commencement ! (*Goes.*)

Silas: (*to Marcus*) Now will you believe me telling you this Nazarene is a danger ?

Marcus: Indeed he would seem to be a very turbulent fellow.

Silas: Will you give him leave to go stir up the whole country, making his attack on the wealthy and the well-to-do ?

Marcus: He had best be silenced for a while. Pilate would not give a clipping of his nail for that thing you call "religion." But to turn around upon property, that is a thing that might spread.

Silas: Maybe *now* you will let your soldiers lend a hand to put him down ?

Marcus: But when will you get a hold of him ? The Head Government would sooner not meddle with him in the daytime.

Silas: Never fear. He will be gaoled before morning. We will take him this very night !

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

Scene: An open place in the City. In the centre the steps of Pilate's Palace. A street goes right and left. It is early morning. There are lighted lamps by the Palace door. 1*st Woman is sitting on the steps.*

1*st Woman:* (*sings*)

There in the night, his comrades leaving,
No shadow near him but his own,
The winds around him keening, grieving,
He fought his battle out alone.

A traitor's kiss the traitor's token;
My grief that such a thing could be!
The strings of every harp are broken,
The leaves are withered on every tree.

My bitter shame, my lasting sorrow,
The crowds that sent his name so high
Failed and forsook him on the morrow,
And he must go alone to die!

(*She gets up and goes out to the left, singing lower to herself. The two other women come in from the right, one hurrying after the other.*)

2nd Woman: Is it true what they are saying that he is taken?

3rd Woman: That is what they were telling me down the road. My heart started with trouble hearing that.

2nd Woman: It must surely be a lie. It is impossible his enemies would dare it, and all the whole country shouting for him yesterday.

3rd Woman: That is the very thing put anger on them. It would wound your heart to think anyone would lay a hand on him, and he the best man that ever walked the road.

2nd Woman: Och! This is a heavy day surely, and the darkest May morning that ever came upon the world!

(*St. Brigit comes on.* *1st Woman comes from the other side.*)

3rd Woman: Here is that Saint of the Gael coming, that some call the fostermother of Christ. She might have some tidings. (*To St. Brigit*) Where were you through the night time?

St. Brigit: I was with the Mother of our Lord.

1st Woman: And what way is she? This trouble must lie very heavy on her.

St. Brigit: It is as if it was foreshowed to her from the beginning. It is a long time there has been a shadow across her heart.

(*The dawn begins to break. Joel comes on, looking downcast.*)

2nd Woman: It is hard to know what is happening. There is no stir yet on this side of Pilate's house.

Joel: It is on the other side the stir is, where Annas the High Priest has his Court.

2nd Woman: Annas! And for what reason is that old man holding his Court in the night time?

Joel: For a bad reason, and a very bad cause.

3rd Woman: Is it true that they have taken our Master?

Joel: They have taken him indeed, and by treachery.

1st Woman: By treachery. That story is the breaking of my heart to me. And indeed I never heard the like in all my years gone by.

2nd Woman: It is a pity for anyone that was against him. There is not a better man to help the poor on this side of the world. Not on this side of the world.

3rd Woman: Who is there that could show him illwill? A man without blemish. There was no

friend or no stranger he would refuse. Look at the Woman of Samaria, how she brought the whole district to believe on him.

Joel: It was no stranger did it.

2nd Woman: Some very bitter enemy it should be, having a black, cruel heart.

Joel: Ah, leave talking. It was one of the twelve were nearest him. One of his comrades and his friends.

2nd Woman: Which of them was it, I wonder. It cannot have been John—or Peter.

Joel: I will not blacken my mouth with that name that will be under a curse for ever!

(*The dawn brightens.*)

1st Woman: He should be a long time before Annas.

Joel: No, but they brought him to Caiaphas with the crowing of the cock—That there may be a curse upon this day for ever!

St. Brigit: But he is not judged yet, or condemned.

Joel: He is as good as judged. They are all his sworn enemies, Scribes and Pharisees, priests and people of note. The best of them is as thorny as a briar.

3rd Woman: They will need some excuse against him.

Joel: What excuse does the wolf make when he grips the lamb by the throat?

2nd Woman: He is white and innocent as a lamb.

St. Brigit: He is the Lamb of God.

Joel: It is a lion he would be if he had but time to raise the country. He had but to call to us that knew him to be the man we were promised through the ages, "To stand for an ensign of the people; to assemble the outcasts of Israel; to gather together the dispersed of Judah." He had but to give us the wind of the word! We would have put fire to every Roman house if he had made but a sign with his hand!

1st Woman: It is likely he was our Redeemer indeed that was foretold, that would make the lame to leap like a deer and the blind to see.

Joel: He had but to make his call, "Awake, awake! Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem! Shake thyself from the dust, loose the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion!" Oh, if I could see her free, and the Roman eagles gone, I think I would be content to lose my soul!

2nd Woman: Maybe he had not the chance, and he brought away in the darkness. A great pity there was no friend within call.

Joel: I myself was not far from him at that time, when he was taken and after he was taken.

3rd Woman: Oh, were you there! And what way at all did it come about?

Joel: I went after him, thinking to get some word or some sign to bring back to the mountains. But when I reached to the olive trees of the garden he was lost to me in the shadows, and I could hear no word. And then I saw his friends.

St. Brigit: The Twelve?

Joel: Themselves—or the most of them. But I was no wiser than before, and I might as well have been deaf and blind, for there had fallen upon them a passion of sleep.

St. Brigit: Oh! How could they sleep and he in danger!

2nd Woman: It is likely they did not know of that. And they should be tired and worn out following him as they did on the road through the whole length of the day.

St. Brigit: And was our Lord himself asleep?

Joel: Tired and all as he was, I think he had never closed an eye. When I went farther I could

hear his voice as if praying for a while. It would seem as if there was some hard thing before him.

St. Brigit: It was surely made known to him what was about to take place.

Joel: The last word I heard him say was "Father if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will but as thou wilt!"

St. Brigit: It was to his Father indeed he was calling. For if he calls himself the Son of Man it is certain he is the Son of the living God.

Joel: I heard then the soldiers coming, and the Chief Priest's men. And I was in dread they would find me there, and I slipped away and rambled the streets for a while. And then I saw lights in a big house, and some stir, and people moving about at the door. I asked no question, but I heard them saying it was Jesus the Nazarene had been brought to be judged. And I slipped in unknownst among the crowd.

2nd Woman: Did you do that? And what way was he?

Joel: Someway tired he looked, with weakness and the want of sleep. Annas was saying it was known he kept company with rebels and with lawbreakers, and was trying to pick out of him the names of his followers and of his friends.

3rd Woman: He would never give them up.

Joel: You may say that indeed. He is the good tree that never would let fall any branch. With all the power Annas has, and his threats, it failed him to get one word out of his mouth.

1st Woman: He never preached hurt or harm to anyone.

Joel: If he did not itself they would likely put a twist on his words. If they are looking for the truth, it is for a truth would suit themselves. Annas had that thought in his mind asking him what he had taught. But he gave a right answer—he spoke very stiff. Not to ask him what he had taught, but to ask them that had heard him.

3rd Woman: That was very fair and very good.

Joel: One of the soldiers said that was no answer to give the High Priest, and hit him a blow in the face.

St. Brigit: Oh ! Did they strike him indeed !

Joel: They did so. And with that Annas sent him on to the Court of Caiaphas.

3rd Woman: He is great with Caiaphas that is joined and wedded with his daughter. I'm in dread he will find no better treatment there.

Joel: And what happened after I don't know,

for the soldiers would let no one go into that Court without them having leave.

1st Woman: A great wonder he did not call down fire from Heaven to destroy the whole of them.

St. Brigit: What he is come for is not to destroy the world, but that the world through him should be saved.

2nd Woman: Oh, they will send him to his death! Is there no door of hope?

(*Daniel comes on.*)

Joel: (*standing up*) What at all are we doing here, prating and chattering, and the man that came to save us being like a bird in the fowler's net!

Daniel: And what are you thinking to do?

Joel: To do in this very hour what was foretold to us through the years past. To rise up and throw out the Romans and their friends that are about to send him to the slaughter! (*He cries out, as Silas comes in and stands behind a pillar*) Who will come to the help of the Country and of the Nazarene?

(*A crowd gathers from both sides.*)

Daniel: Well, I'll give my help to whoever will give me the price of a drop to keep up my courage!

Joel: Let alone talking of prices or profit! (*goes up a step*) The man, Jesus of Nazareth that is come to be our leader and will be our King——

Crowd: So he will! He is well worthy!

1*st Man:* He has the prayers of the poor of the world!

Joel: He is brought to prison! His enemies are judging him. They are putting insults on him! I saw a soldier hitting him a clout on the face——

(*A murmur of anger from the crowd.*)

1*st Man:* We'll drag him out of their hands!

2*nd Man:* We'll pull down the Court!

3*rd Man:* Town and country will come to his aid!

(*Silas, who has been whispering with Daniel, and has put something in his hand, comes in front of the pillar.*)

Joel: Once we get him out of their hands he will be safe!

1*st Man:* Not a door but will be open to him!

2*nd Man:* Their best won't find him!

1*st Man:* Come on now till we'll save him!

Joel: We'll fall on the guard as they are bringing him out of the Court, till he will slip away through us!

1st Man: Everyone of us will do away with one of the soldiers !

2nd Man: We'll banish them !

3rd Man: The curse of the weak on them !

1st Man: And the curse of the strong !

Joel: We'll put fire to their barracks that are empty ! They'll find nothing but ashes when they'll go look for their catapults and their swords !

Crowd: Come on ! Come on ! Away with Cæsar ! We'll have a King of our own.

Silas: (*coming forward*) Hearken now to me. What everyone of you will have is a rope around your neck, and a death by stoning or by the sword.

Joel: (*turning to him*) Even so ! If we are killed itself, to die for our country is a good death to die !

Silas: If it is death you are craving you'll get it, and go fatten the foxes in the fields !

Joel: We're not so easy put down ! We'll give Rome her wages for the bones she has left bleaching through the world !

Silas: And what have ye in your hands to go battle with Rome that has conquered Gaul and the most of the countries of the known world ? Maybe a stump of a stick you might go cut in the garden above !

Joel: Every gap will be made easy to us! God is stronger than the Romans!

Silas: (*to the crowd, holding up tablets*) What have *ye* to say? I am writing on my tablets the name of such of you as are ready to follow this mountainy lad that never walked the streets of a town till yesterday! Is it along with him ye are going like conies into a snare or a trap?

1st Man: Maybe the right time didn't come yet.

Joel: Do not renage now! Come on and put them to the rout!

2nd Man: Sure enough we might find ourselves taken and tormented in a gaol.

3rd Man: I've no mind to put myself in a sharp-toothed trap.

1st Man: In my opinion we can serve the country better living than dead.

Joel: What did the prophets say? "Turn ye to the stronghold ye prisoners of hope! For now I will break the yoke from off thee and will break thy bonds in sunder." That saying must come true!

2nd Man: The time didn't come yet. We'll wait for another chance. (*Goes.*)

Joel: Are you all forsaking him?

3rd Man: I wouldn't wish to go against the neighbours. (*Goes.*)

Joel: Oh ! If I was up on the hillsides, I wouldn't be without help this day ! (*All have gone but Silas.*)

Silas: You were I suppose a close friend of the Nazarene ?

Joel: I never saw him till yesterday, but I know him to be the man is come to save us.

Silas: You thought him to be like yourself—a red enemy to the Romans ?

Joel: There is no good man but is that.

Silas: To be sure, to be sure. I am saying nothing against it. Wouldn't we all be well pleased having the country in our own hands ?

Joel: I see yourself very thick with the foreigners.

Silas: Getting what I can by civility. I do more for the country that way than you rebels by showing your ill-will.

Joel: It was by your help our leader was taken.

Silas: Your leader is he ? Well, there are as great fools to-day as ever there were in the world.

Joel: In or out of prison my heart is with the man that is being tried for his life.

Silas: And you thought him to be for upsetting the Government? Well, let me tell you he was deceiving you.

Joel: No one but a fool or a woman would say such a thing as that!

Silas: No one but a cracked mountainy youngster would be ignorant that he bade the people pay tribute to Cæsar. All the world knows that. And more again, there is a story going that he did miracles, bringing the money for tribute up from the depths of the sea sooner than let the Government be at the loss of it.

Joel: There must be some answer to that.

Silas: (*interrupting*) Blind as you are can't you see that when he thought himself strong enough to make an attack, what he attacked was not the palace of Pilate or his Court. No, but the Temple of the Jews, our own Temple and the glory of our nation. Threaten he did to knock the whole of it within three days. Could he do that without the foreign soldiers' help? To knock down our laws along with it, and our customs. What had he in mind doing that but to put Judea entirely into the hand of Rome, the same as a bird's nest?

Joel: (*passionately*) I would as soon believe the sun to be failing in the sky!

(*He goes away sorrowfully, as Marcus comes out from the door.*)

Marcus: Well, Silas, I was looking for you in the Court of Caiaphas, and the trial of the Nazarene going on.

Silas: I have my own work to do among the people. There was danger they would make some attempt to rescue him. But it's likely now that unless an odd woman or a cripple there is no one will put out any cry for him at all. What way is the trial going? What happened with Caiaphas?

Marcus: (*with a laugh*) What you might know would happen! With all your bragging of your Jewish law it would seem not to be able to deal with one poor prophet of the roads, but to send him from Caiaphas to the Court of Pilate to settle the case! Rousing him from his sleep and his slumber to put on his judgment robes, and go question the prisoner, that they brought in by the side door, unknown to the people of the city. I wonder he brought his life so far, for if your old Annas is cranky and crabbed enough, I give you my word the son-in-law is worse again.

Silas: That is not the way to be speaking of the High Priests.

Marcus: All the talk you had of your laws, from

Moses down, and the danger of a man doing cures by the roadside, and that he would pull down the whole Empire, and that all we had to do was to get a hold of him and bring him before your judges !

Silas: And what complaint have you to make of being asked to do that much ?

Marcus: That much ! Dragging our soldiers out on a job that is no profit to us, and will bring us into discredit with the people ! And when we have done all that, and delivered him into your Court that is swarming with Scribes and lawyers—what happens ?

Silas: To question him I suppose they did ; and to bring witnesses.

Marcus: That's it ! Witnesses ! Isn't that the first thing if a man is to be found guilty, to have the witnesses ready against him ?

Silas: So they had them ready. They were gathering them this week past.

Marcus: Then they are bad harvesters. It's the Judges in Rome that would laugh their fill if they could be here to-day ! Witnesses ! A whole fleet of them, paid and unpaid, coming in pairs and in threes and alone, to work malice on him. And whatever way they came it was easy seen after

a few questions that there was no two or no three of them that could agree together.

Silas: I had a right to have been there myself. Bad management.

Marcus: They brought in two together at the last, that said the prisoner had given out in their hearing he would pull down the Temple stone by stone. Is that sort of talk enough to call together the High Court in the night time?

Silas: He said it sure enough.

Marcus: A pity you were not there to swear to that, for the two that told it could not agree upon the words. After that, Caiaphas took in hand himself to catechize the Nazarene.

Silas: It was time for him. Why couldn't he do it at the first.

Marcus: Little he got by it. No answer at all, until at the last the question was put in the name of the living God.

Silas: He answered that?

Marcus: It was put to him straight and fair—"Are you the Son of God?" He said to that, "If I tell you ye will not believe;" and then, "ye say that I am." And he said the Son of Man would sit in the hereafter on the right hand of the power

of God. And whether he meant himself, or some one of the everliving Gods, I cannot tell.

Silas: That was rank blasphemy. There is no need of other witnesses. That is worthy of death.

Marcus: So they were saying in the Court, the whole of them. It was the first thing they could catch a hold of. And as to Caiaphas, he made the most of it, showing off as if on a stage, tearing his clothes as if raging mad. He has a bitter and a hasty nature sure enough.

Silas: It is no wonder he should be in a passion.

Marcus: As to the rest of them, soldiers and lookers on, they began to spit at the prisoner, and to strike at him, and buffet him, and to cover his eyes, and say, "Prophesy now which of us hit that stroke?" The whole of the assembly ran wild with spite and malice, that nearly seemed to come from some sort of fear or fright.

Silas: Our Judges are not so easy frightened, whatever fear there might be on that author of mischief, the Nazarene, finding himself in their hand.

Marcus: He was indeed like a bird of the high air cast down among wild cats of the clefts. They lost no time making their attack on him.

Silas: That's right. Give him cruelty till you'll put sense in him. That's the way to tame him and to bring him down.

Marcus: I don't know. I give you my word you would wonder at him, facing the whole of them as he did, without fear or flinching, without any frown on his face, but as if he was not in the one world with them at all.

Silas: It seems like as if he had put some spell upon yourself, or some craziness.

Marcus: To look at him, and to see his courage, and never a friend to help, you would nearly say him to be the only man in the place you would call a man, whether he is or is not of the gods.

Silas: It will be a poor story if Pilate your master leans to his side as you yourself are seeming to do.

Marcus: Pilate won't take that much notice of him. He is easy-minded. He will maybe give him up to the priests that are calling for his death, to humour them, even if he finds no cause against him. And if he does that, it will not be for the sake of the Roman Empire, but that you are welcome to do away with as many of your own nation as is pleasing to you.

Silas: So it will please the people and satisfy them.

Marcus: I saw no sign of that yesterday, when the whole full of the road was shouting for him.

Silas: You may believe me telling you they will have another shout and another story to-day.

Marcus: So they might. This shouting of crowds is but the cackling of ganders and their flock, or the howling of wild dogs after their prey. And I wouldn't wonder at all if Pilate gets vexed with them making their clamour around his house, after spoiling his sleep on him, and will let off the Nazarene in the finish, that gave him no annoyance at all.

(*He goes as Joel comes back and is walking across gloomily.*)

Silas: Come hither now! Did you hear that your leader that is going to rise against Rome is after being brought before Pilate?

Joel: That is your own doing, and your own fault. Recognizing the foreign Courts.

Silas: You'll see now is he in with the foreign Government! Like master, like man, and Pilate's trusted man was here on the minute, and if you heard him putting a good name on the Nazarene, and saying he was the best man in the Court, you would maybe believe he had some settlement made with them.

Joel: That he had betrayed the country? I would never believe that.

Silas: Wait a while and maybe you'll see Pilate is on his side, and will make excuses for him.

Joel: If Pilate does that and had any treaty with him, I will never believe again in anyone at all, man, priest or God, in or out of the world.

(*He goes off. Silas goes over to meet Daniel, who comes on.*)

Silas: Did you do the work I bade you?

Daniel: (*drunkenly*) I did. I went into the drinking houses, and gave a glass—and the promise of another—to every man that would come into the Square and call out against the Nazarene.

Silas: Very good. His own followers are affrighted and scattered here and there. That will do. (*Is going.*)

Daniel: I have all the money spent. I am wanting more.

Silas: You'll not get it till this day's work is done, or you'll be lying in a ditch, and no use to anyone.

Daniel: I am use! And great use! If you have the people threatened, I have them coaxed!

Silas: (*giving him some money*) Go on then—put hurry on you. Make no delay. There is some

stir in the Governor's house. It is likely the trial is at an end. (*Pushes him off, and goes in at door.*)

Daniel: (*shouting*) Come on, lads! Let ye shout against the Nazarene till your throat is dry. (*Crowd begins to gather.*) And believe me you won't be drouthy to-night! Come on, now! Come on, here! Down with the Nazarene! Up Pilate!

Silas: (*Coming from the door*) Bid them to call for Pilate to come out the door! Let him see they are against the prisoner! (*The Women come on.*)

Daniel: Let ye shout now! Make a call for Pilate!

1*st Man:* What is it we want with him?

Daniel: Little I care! Let him come out till we'll get a view of him. Pilate! Pilate!

Crowd: Pilate! Pilate! Come out and speak to us! Pilate!

Silas: Take care is he shielding the Nazarene that is your enemy!

1*st Woman:* He is no enemy but our friend!

Silas: (*pushing her away*) Raising riots he is! Pulling down the country!

3*rd Woman:* He is worthy to be our King!

Silas: (*to the crowd*) Be said and led by those that have knowledge and that you know. He is bringing trouble on you. He will wreck and de-

stroy the city along with the Temple. He will bring the soldiers on you !

(*Groans from the crowd.*)

Silas: No peace and comfort in your lives ! Starvation in place of plenty ! Rid yourselves of him or the whole of ye will be driven in chains (*groans*). Let this man die, and save the whole nation. Tell out that now to Pilate !

Crowd: Pilate ! Pilate ! Come out, Pilate !

Pilate: (*coming out on the steps, holds up his hand for silence*) What is this uproar ?

Crowd: Down with the Nazarene !

Pilate: (*holding up his hand again*) Be silent ! (*The crowd obeys*). This man was brought to me as one that is perverting the nation, and leading the people astray.

Crowd: That's right ! So he is leading us astray !

Pilate: A ringleader, a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition—forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar——

Crowd: So he is against Cæsar !

Pilate: That is what was laid down. But it is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die before that he which is accused have the

accuser face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

Silas: So they did face him! The witnesses laid their clear case before Caiaphas!

Crowd: That's it! That's it! Their clear case!

Pilate: Their witness did not agree, and therefore it did not stand.

Silas: If he was not a malefactor we would not have sent him to you!

Crowd: That's the chat!

Pilate: They had certain questions against him of their own superstition. But I, as a Roman Governor, have nothing against him.

1st Man: He is giving us no clear answer!

Silas: Never fear he will give in to us when he'll see we will not give in to him. (*To Pilate*) Is it nothing to you that he gave himself out to be a King?

Pilate: I questioned him as to that. His answer was, "My Kingdom is not of this world."

1st Woman: That is so. He is the King of Heaven.

Pilate: My jurisdiction does not go outside this world and this Empire of Rome. I asked him again, "Art thou a King?" and he said, "To that end

was I born, and to this end came I into the world that I should bear witness to the truth."

1st Woman: That is so. He came to bear witness to the truth.

Pilate: What is truth? (*He turns to go.*)

1st Man: Will you let him make his escape!

2nd Man: Little he cares for ourselves!

3rd Man: Or for our Priests! Up Caiaphas!

Pilate: (*turning back*) Am I a Jew? It is best for me to send him back to your own judgment seat, and let you judge him by your own laws.

Silas: It is for his death we make our call. You know well it is not lawful for us to put any man to death.

Crowd: He is deserving of death!

Pilate: Have your own way, then. I will not refuse the Chief Priests and the people. I am willing to do what is pleasing to them. I will go back and give judgment against him.

Crowd: That's right! (*They cheer*).

1st Man: Come back, let ye, to the door of the Court!

2nd Man: Hurry on till we'll see him condemned! (*They all run off*).

(*Pilate turns to go. Marcus meets him inside the doorway.*)

Marcus: Here is the Egyptian Nurse with a message. (*He goes back.*)

Egyptian: (*pushing past him*) Pilate, Pilate, your wife is calling for you.

Pilate: Tell her I cannot come. I am going to the Hall of Judgment.

Egyptian: She bade me give you a message.

Pilate: It must wait.

Egyptian: It is not an idle matter makes her call to you.

Pilate: My own business is not idle, a matter of a man's life.

Egyptian: Her business also is concerned with life and death.

Pilate: I have but to give sentence. There will be little delay in that.

Egyptian: (*seizing his arm*) Hearken Pilate. She had a vision of the night.

Pilate: What has that to do with life or death?

Egyptian: She cried out in her sleep—a sharp cry that wakened me. I asked her what ailed her. She was pale and trembling. She called for you, "Pilate, come!" and then, "Where is he?

Where is my husband? There is some great danger before him."

Pilate: A foolish dream. What way could I be in danger in my own Judgment Hall?

Egyptian: She was as if shivering. She held my hands. She said, "Shadow-shapes gathered around me calling out a warning—a warning against the shedding of innocent blood." She asked me then were you sleeping yet, and if you had any heavy business before you. I told her they had wakened you at the parting of night and day to go judge some disturber, some lawbreaker that was accused by the Jews. She cried out again——

Pilate: That could lead me into no danger. It is but a wandering Nazarene that has given offence to some of these Jewish bigots. That is folly.

Egyptian: You would think it no folly if you had seen the way she was, as if remembering some dreadful thing. "I see it—I see it, as it was in the dream," she said. "I saw him sending a just man to his death. I saw blood—dropping, dropping—I saw as if in a mirror Pilate sent back to Italy—to Rome."

Pilate: To Italy! That is good. Oh that I could be there at this time! That I could see the gardens by the Tiber, and feel the peace that is in the heart of Rome! To be rid of these ugly

scolding priests, and their God that sends but his harsh threatenings and has no human form!

Egyptian: In Rome she saw you, and beyond Rome, and sent on again—on again—without rest. And all the time she saw you trying to wipe away some blood that was on your hands. And you were as if in disgrace, and she could not reach to you.

Pilate: And then—what did she see?

Egyptian: Far away, westward—in the country of the Gauls—she saw you. (*She covers her eyes with her hand.*)

Pilate: What did she see?

Egyptian: She saw you in the single shirt of linen that was your shroud. She saw blood again upon your hands——. And this time it was your own life blood. And it was by yourself it was shed.

Pilate: (*in a whisper*) That was the end?

Egyptian: She rose up then, and she called out, as if she was but just on the moment awake: "Tell him to have nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things in my dream because of him!"

(*She goes back into the Palace. Pilate leans for a moment against the door. The people come running back.*)

1st Man: There is Pilate. He never went to the Court at all.

2nd Man: He was but mocking us !

3rd Man: Making little of us ! Ridiculing us !

Crowd: Hurry on with the judgment ! No delay !

Silas: That is not the way to treat our nation !

Pilate: (*coming forward slowly*) I would need more evidence that he has broken the law before I would condemn him.

Silas: He stirred up the people, urging them to destruction !

Daniel: Through the whole country !

1st Man: Through every district—beginning from Galilee !

Pilate: From Galilee ! Is he a Galilean ?

1st Man: He is that !

2nd Man: So he is ! A Galilean !

Pilate: Then I am free of him ! He belongs to Herod's jurisdiction, not mine. I will send him to Herod's Court ! (*He goes back into the Palace.*)

1st Man: Come and see him with Herod !

2nd Man: Come on to Herod's Court !

3rd Man: He will get no mercy there ! (*They all go off, except the Women and Daniel.*)

1st Woman: From one Judge to another, and every one worse than another.

3rd Woman: He will find no escape. Herod that struck the head off John the Baptist will not spare him that is a greater prophet again.

Judas: (*coming in has heard the last words*) What are you saying? Is it that he is sent to Herod?

1st Woman: You are one of his followers. It is often I took notice of you in his company. To know of his life being in danger must put a great weight upon your heart.

Judas: They will but banish him. Or maybe gaol him for a while.

1st Woman: It is his death his enemies are calling for. A bad crowd against him, and a careless Pilate. They are very bitter. It will be hard for him to make his escape.

3rd Woman: Twelve friends that we thought would die for him, and one of them betrayed him.

2nd Woman: There could hardly be a greater treachery than that. To betray his Master!

1st Woman: If ever it is known who it is, there will be a cruel end before him.

Judas: (*going on*) Why wouldn't he get the better of them if he has power from Heaven?

Wouldn't he be able to throw a mist of darkness around him, and to slip away?

3rd Woman: He will never make his escape that way. You might remember him saying, "He that findeth his life will lose it, but he that loses it will find it."

Judas: Or to call down fire from Heaven.

2nd Woman: It is on whoever betrayed him that should fall.

(*Judas goes on.*)

Daniel: (*still rather drunken, catching hold of him as he passes*) You did that night work well surely. I am a good man myself to do a job of the sort, but you are a better.

Judas: Leave go of me!

Daniel: To bring the soldiers up so nice and so quiet through the darkness, where there was no one to call out, or to make any disturbance at all.

Judas: Let me go, I say! (*The Women have gathered around them.*)

Daniel: Sure you need not mind me knowing it. Don't be so stiff now. I earn my money fair and honest calling Hi! for one, and Down with another, according as I am paid. Why wouldn't I earn my little supper shouting with my voice as good as labouring with my hands? Do not be so

unfriendly now. Aren't we on the one side? The two of us are covetous for money. You are a big man, and I am a small man that drank away my means, and must go forage along the roads. And I don't begrudge you your reward. If all I got out of it is these coppers, and they gave you silver on this job, there's not the black of my nail between us. For if I have the corner boys all bought, you have your Master sold!

3rd Woman: Oh, isn't he the terrible type of a ruffian?

1st Woman: The worst man you could think of wouldn't do a thing like that!

(*They all shrink from him. St. John and St. Brigit come it.*)

St. John: Judas, is *that* your Master? (*He goes on. Daniel slinks away.*)

2nd Woman: It is best for you hide your head for ever. To take money for betraying him! That is the worst of all.

Judas: (*holding out the purse*) I wish to God you would take the money, and know how little I covet it! I bestow it to you as a free gift!

2nd Woman: Do you think I would touch it with my hand! It is a crooked and a very crooked way you got it!

Judas: (*to 1st Woman*) Can't you bring it away, and divide it on the poor.

1st Woman: There is no beggar going the road would touch it, or no leper, knowing it to be the price of blood!

St. Brigit: Go and repent. Go bring it to the priests in your temple as an offering for sin. (*He steals away, the Women follow whispering. Marcus comes out from the door, and Silas from the street.*)

Silas: What happened since with the prisoner?

Marcus: (*with a scornful laugh*) The same as would happen a ball you would strike against a wall with your stick. Back again he comes to us, from the *third* of your Jewish big men.

Silas: And did Herod do nothing at all?

Marcus: To all the questions he put out of his mouth he got no answer. He bade him then do some miracle before him; but the Nazarene never stirred hand or foot, and said no word.

Silas: Herod is not used to be made little of that way.

Marcus: If he wanted talk he heard enough of it from the Chief Priests and the Scribes, that called the prisoner all the names, one worse than another, and accused him of this and that. And when it was

said he had claimed to be a King, Herod put on him in mockery the purple dress of a King, and ridiculed him, and gave him to be handled by the soldiers, and made a speedy riddance of him, sending him back here to us again.

(*Joel comes in, but stops, seeing them.*)

Silas: Pilate has nothing to do now but to condemn him.

Marcus: I don't know in the world wide what happened Pilate. He would seem as if unwilling to see him again, or to go against him. I never knew him to be this way before.

(*He goes on.*)

Silas: (*to Joel*) Did you hear that? Now will you believe me saying he had his terms made with the foreign Government?

Joel: I would never believe it unless from himself—or it might be from Pilate himself.

Crowd: (*coming back from one side, as the women come from the other*) Pilate! Pilate!

Marcus: (*coming out*) Make way there!

(*Pilate comes out.*)

1st Man: Here he is! Up Pilate!

2nd Man: Put down the Nazarene!

Daniel: Down with him! Up the Empire! Up Cæsar!

Pilate: (*holds up his hand impatiently, and speaks petulantly*) When ye brought this man to me I told you I found no fault in him touching those things whereof ye accuse him.

Crowd: Boo-oo! Boo-ooo!

Pilate: No, nor yet Herod—for I sent you to him, and you see *he* found nothing worthy of death in him. I will therefore chastise him—and release him.

Silas: You will let him go free!

Crowd: To let him off! Boo-ooo!

Pilate: Why, what evil has he done? I tell you again, I find no fault in him.

Crowd: Away with him! He is worthy of death!

Pilate: Listen! It is a custom that at the Feast I release one prisoner to you——

Crowd: Barabbas! Give us out Barabbas!

Pilate: Barabbas! That is a robber?

Crowd: Give us Barabbas!

Joel: I would nearly sooner have Barabbas that we knew from the first to be a rogue!

Pilate: What will ye then that I do to him whom ye call the King of the Jews?

Crowd: Crucify him! Let him be crucified! (*Soldiers bring Christ to the door.*)

Joel: Crucify him!

(*Pilate leads Him on to the steps. He wears a crown of thorns and a purple robe.*)

Pilate: Behold the Man!

Crowd: Crucify him!

Pilate: Take ye him and crucify him, for I find no fault in him.

Silas: We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God!

Pilate: (*to Christ*) Speakest thou not? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and power to release thee?

Christ: Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee by God. Therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.

(*Pilate hesitates.*)

Pilate: (*making a last cry to the people*) Shall I crucify your King?

Daniel: We have no king but Cæsar!

Silas: (*to Pilate, coming in front of the crowd*) Whoever makes himself a king speaks against

Cæsar. If you let this man go you are not Cæsar's friend.

(*Pilate bows his head. The Egyptian comes out swiftly with a silver jug and basin. She splashes water over Pilate's hands. He shakes the water off, rinsing his hands*).

Pilate: I am innocent of the blood of this just person! See ye to it!

Crowd: Let him be crucified!

(*The soldiers seize Christ.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

Scene: A roadside, the road rising in rough steps on one side; on the other, a little booth with wine and fruit, where some soldiers are drinking.

1*st Soldier:* (*Shading his eyes, and looking up the hill*) They are just putting up the Cross for the Nazarene.

2*nd Soldier:* (*coming in from the road, throws down a hammer and some nails he is carrying, and a coil of rope, and takes some wine*) He fell carrying it. He is on the road yet. He has great courage, but his body is weak after all he went through.

3*rd Soldier:* I never heard yet for what crime he was sent to his death. He was not a thief, like the other two, or a murderer the same as Barabbas.

1*st Soldier:* These Jewish priests that were jealous of him, they are saying. In dread more respect would be paid to him than to themselves through the feast days. They had it settled in their minds to get quit of him.

3*rd Soldier:* I wonder at Pilate giving in to them, for it was easy seen he didn't like the job.

1st Soldier: There are some women making their way to the Cross that has been put up for him on the height. It's best drive them back from it. There is no use having crying and bawling going on with the sound of the hammering of the nails.

3rd Soldier: (*goes up a step and shouts*) Send down those women out of that! They have no call to be getting into the way of our work!

2nd Soldier: There was a Woman following after him on the road, and that helped him up when he fell. They were saying it was his Mother.

3rd Soldier: I would nearly pity any mother of a son that would see him sent to such a hard death.

(*The Women come down the steps.*)

1st Soldier: Come on, now! There is no place for you there above!

1st Woman: May we stop here, sir, by the side of the road?

1st Soldier: I wonder what at all brings you looking at such an ugly sight?

1st Woman: He is our Master and our Lord.

1st Soldier: Well, keep yourselves quiet and behave yourselves, or it will be worse for you. (*To the other soldiers*) Come on now to hurry them that are on the road.

(*They go off.*)

1st Woman: (sitting down) If it is long the night was, the day is longer again.

3rd Woman: It is a pitiful story the way he is. The reach of his hand was always good to the poor.

1st Woman: He never put grief on his Mother, or on any child at all.

2nd Woman: Why at all does he not save himself? If he would but lift his hand there is not one of them but would fall dead.

1st Woman: He is maybe weary of serving the world, with the bad treatment and the abuse he was given.

1st Woman: He is the just Prince of patience. He gives kindness for hatred. (*She sings*)

He shows no malice, but love and pity,
Forgives them all with his failing breath;
The foreign soldiers that spoil our city,
That flog and drag him to shameful death.

(*St. Brigit comes in from down the road.*)

They bruised his brow with their crown of briars;
They mocked him with every ugly thing;
He that could shrivel them all with fire
He held his silence, and he a King!

I call and cry to the King of Graces,
To scourge and scatter by land and sea,
To bring disgrace on their wicked faces ;
To smite and shrivel that crooked tree !

2nd Woman: If the world was talking, the relics of the old religion would be in you yet.

St. Brigit: He used to be saying, the Disciple was telling me, " Love your enemies ; bless them that curse you ; pray for them which despitefully use you."

3rd Woman: It will be hard for him to say that to-day.

St. Brigit: He will say it to the last. He is clean gold. Surely, there will never be any man east or west will refuse to forgive another, where our Lord gave forgiveness to his enemies.

2nd Woman: You did well coming here to see him with your own eyes. For this is a story will have seven shapes put on it.

1st Woman: Indeed it is a heart-broken story you will have to bring back to Ireland.

St. Brigit: No ; but a great story and a great praise I will bring with me. I have heard him myself, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

1st Woman: You would never think they would get leave to strike and scourge him the way they did.

St. Brigit: I heard some saying it was written in the old prophecies, "A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief."

3rd Woman: I don't know what was it brought him into this world at all. Great courage he had coming to such an unruly place. He behaved well facing it when he knew what was before him.

2nd Woman: The worst at all is to think of the poor Mother. Why wouldn't they leave him to the death that is allotted by nature? It is too soon his candle to be spent.

1st Woman: No smile and no laughter will be upon her lips for ever.

St. Brigit: Never fear there will be joy in her heart in the years to come, knowing that he has visited and redeemed his people.

(*She goes back by the road.*)

3rd Woman: Her darling to be taken from her that is comely without and within. And he young, that I thought his keeners would not yet be born.

2nd Woman: That is the best (*laughs to herself*). Isn't it happy for him to go out of our sight, while

he is in his bloom, and the ugliness of the body in age never to be remembered against him.

1st Woman: (*singing*)

The first great joy that Mary had, it was the joy
of one,
To see her own son Jesus to suck at her breastbone ;

2nd Woman:

The next great joy that Mary had it was the joy
of two
To see her own son Jesus to make the lame to go !

3rd Woman:

The third great joy that Mary had, it was the joy
of three
To see her own son Jesus to make the blind to see !

(*The crowd rushes on from the road, Daniel among them.*)

1st Man: Hurry on till we'll get a good place !
Daniel: You'll get no good view here, but higher up.

2nd Man: (*turning back from the steps*) The soldiers will let us go no farther.

1st Soldier: (*coming with others down the steps*) Let you keep back! Stop where you are. There is no leave to pass.

Daniel: (*sitting down*) I'll stop where I am, so. There's as good a chance of luck turning to you, and you sitting at your ease, as if you were thrusting after it.

2nd Soldier: What do you want coming here at all?

Daniel: I have all my money spent, giving drinks to this one and that one, and little thanks for it. Where will I get my night's lodging and my bite? There is always a chance of some profit turning up in a crowd.

(*Slow music and drums heard in the distance.*)

1st Soldier: Here he is coming.

2nd Soldier: He is not, only the thieves.

1st Soldier: No, they were brought by the other road a while ago.

Daniel: That's a pity. When we come out to see a show, the more of it we can see the better.

(*Silas and Marcus come on from the road. The crowd draw back.*)

Marcus: A strange thing your Hebrew people thronging to see a man crucified. Why wouldn't they keep him for a circus and throw him to the

wild beasts? That now is sport worth losing a day on.

Silas: That sort of a death is not suitable to our law.

Marcus: It is suitable enough for Octavius Cæsar. Ye are a gloomy race, and have no right notion of taking your pleasure.

Silas: It is pleasure enough to see our enemy put down.

Marcus: Those two thieves, now, would have made a good fight with a lion or a thing of the kind. They had the appearance of being used to violence.

Silas: We are satisfied with our own customs, and have no need of yours.

Marcus: You are getting very impudent since you got your own way this morning.

Silas: You that were mocking at our Judges! I tell you I myself picked the fun of the world out of your own Pilate, the way he went swaying from side to side.

Marcus: Have a care now! I'd as lief give you up to the captain beyond for throwing contempt on the Government, as I'd throw an empty oyster shell into the waves!

Silas: Let you stop putting insults on me!

Marcus: Gabbing as if you were some great grandee, with all your gibberish about your laws! I've a mind to lodge you in a cell to learn you respect for Roman law!

(*Pushes him. He stumbles and is caught by Joel who comes in. Marcus goes on up the steps.*)

Joel: My bitter curse on you, where you deceived me a while ago, making me call out against the best man the world ever saw! You have a great wrong done me! If he was not a rebel itself, his name will surely be written in the book of the people! His friendship would be better to me than all the world's gold.

Silas: Leave handling me! What have I to do with you? You are no use to me now.

Joel: My bitter shame! I cried out, "Crucify him!" That you may come to the same death yourself for that wicked deed!

1*st Soldier:* (*coming down steps seizes Silas*) Here you, Jew, what are you brawling about? First with the Sergeant of Pilate's guard, and now with this vagabond!

Silas: Take your hand off me!

1*st Soldier:* We'll put you in a safe place till we'll have time to listen to you. (*Soldiers drag Silas off up the steps.*)

(*A shout from the crowd—"Here he is coming!"*)

Joel: Oh, shining God! Why couldn't we fight and beat them all! Oh, let me hide myself! His eye to fall on me my heart would break like a nut! (*He goes over to the Women, who have stood up.*)

1*st Woman:* You were shouting for him but yesterday.

Joel: That's the way of it! All the generations looking for him and praying for him. We wanted him, and we got him, and what we did with him was to kill him. And that is the way it will be ever and always, so long as leaves grow upon the trees!

3*rd Woman:* He is the Lord we looked for sure enough.

Joel: If he is or is not the Christ I cannot tell. But whether or no, he is the only whole gentleman in the world! (*He kneels. The tramp of feet is heard to the right. The Women look down the road. They beat their hands, and cry out.*)

1*st Woman:* Oh, my grief! To see him bound with the narrow ropes of hemp! The marks of the thorns on his brow!

2*nd Woman:* My heart is withered like the

withering of the trees! (*They hide their faces in their hands and kneel.*)

(*Christ appears. He is still wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. A soldier carries the inscription, "I.N.R.I."—Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews—The Mother and St. John are following him, and St. Brigit. She comes over to the women. The soldiers stop to take wine from the booth. The procession stops.*)

Christ: (*turning to the Women*) Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.

1*st Woman:* You to be gone, who have we to go to? You have the words of eternal life!

Christ: I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you.

1*st Woman:* Have you any word to leave with us at all?

Christ: A new commandment I give you, that ye love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if you have love one to another.

1*st Woman:* We will keep that word in our heart till our life's end.

Christ: (*going on a step farther*) Father, the hour is come! Now I am no more in the world,

and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are one!

Marcus: (*coming back*) Move on, there! What is this delay for?

2nd Soldier: (*putting his hand on Christ's shoulder, and pushing him*) You have no leave to stop!

3rd Soldier: If you are the King of the Jews save yourself!

2nd Soldier: He trusted in God. Let him deliver him now if he will have him.

1st Soldier: He might want another touch of the scourge. (*Takes up the rope from the ground and threatens him.*)

3rd Soldier: Bare his shoulders for it! (*They drag off his robe roughly.*)

St. John: (*calling out*) Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?

Christ: Father forgive them, for they know not what they do! (*He goes up the steps followed by the Mother and St. John.*)

1st Soldier: (*taking the robe*) It is a good coat. I will keep it for my share.

2nd Soldier: You will not! I earned it well myself!

1st Soldier: I'll run my sword through it. I'll make two halves.

2nd Soldier: You'll spoil it splitting it. It is without any seam.

3rd Soldier: No, but keep it and divide it with the rest of the clothes.

2nd Soldier: The rest are no good. This is the only garment worth while.

1st Soldier: If we had dice we'd play for it.

Daniel: Here now, I have dice for games in my hand.

1st Soldier: I'll engage you have, and for tricking. I know your sort.

2nd Soldier: Play for it. The highest wins. (*They go to table.*)

1st Soldier: (*throwing*) Six and deuce! Beat that if you can!

2nd Soldier: (*throwing*) Four and three!

3rd Soldier: Deuce and ace. No luck. I'll try again.

1st Soldier: You will not! It's my throw. (*Throws.*)

3rd Soldier: Your hurry didn't help you! It is but double three.

1st Soldier: Give it now to me! (*Seizes box.*)

2nd Soldier: (*snatching it from him*) No, it's my turn. (*Throws.*) Double six! I have it.

1st Soldier: No, but nothing! They rolled off the board!

2nd Soldier: It was yourself that shook it! (*He seizes the robe and goes towards the steps.*)

1st Soldier: (*following him*) That's a lie!

3rd Soldier: It will be torn between you, and no use at all.

(*1st and 2nd Soldiers go off dragging at it.*)

1st Woman: (*laying her hand on the arm of 3rd Soldier, and holding out a pitcher.*) If ever you had kindness from a mother or a mother's son, will you bring this drink to our Lord?

3rd Soldier: What is it? To hasten his death?

1st Woman: No, but there are sleepy herbs in it that might give a little ease from his pain. (*He takes it and goes.*)

2nd Soldier: (*coming back*) It is here I left the hammer and the nails.

Daniel: Here they are for you. (*He holds them out.*)

2nd Soldier: (*takes them, hesitates and throws them down*) No, I will not. I cannot use them. There was never a man spoke like this man.

Voice of 1st Soldier: Come on, bring the hammer. That is your job.

2nd Soldier: I will never lift a hand against him.

1st Soldier: (*coming to top of steps*) Hurry! Hurry! What ails you?

2nd Soldier: (*to Daniel*) Go you and drive in the nails in place of me. Here, I will give you the whole of my day's pay. (*Puts money in his hands.*)

Daniel: Sitting still is the best. I was thinking I would not go empty out of this. Just to sit still and quiet, and profit will turn to you in the finish.

(*He goes off, taking the hammer and nails.*)

2nd Soldier: (*calling after him*) That you may never have any quiet or any rest from wandering for ever for your share in this day's work! And as much of my curse as does not reach to you, may it reach to your tribe and to your children! (*Follows him.*)

(*Judas comes in from the road. He walks across shading his eyes, looking up the hill, goes out of sight a moment, and comes back with his hand over his eyes.*)

Joel: That God may perish him!

1st Woman: It is Judas that betrayed him.

2nd Woman: The black-hearted traitor!

3rd Woman: Let him go hide himself under some scalp of a rock, or in a hole in the earth, or in the thickness of the woods!

Judas: (*putting his hands over his ears*) Oh! the sound of the hammering! What way can I ever shut it out!

Joel: Reproach and withering on you!

1st Woman: It will go hard with you on the Day of the Mountain!

3rd Woman: To bring him as you did to his death sod! Thursday sold to his enemies, and on Friday a sieve of holes with the nails!

St. Brigit: Go ask his forgiveness even now. He never refused any.

Judas: What is your chattering to me? He looked at me a while ago as he passed the road. It is I myself that betrayed the Son of God!

(*He hides his face again.*)

1st Woman: I declare I'd nearly pity him. It might be it was his lot, and that he had his treachery settled for him four thousand years before his birth.

Joel: It is a heavy curse there will be on you, and a price on your head, the same as there would be upon a wolf. It is a lone shadow you will be, going through the world,

Judas: Ah, what are your words and your curses, and what need is there to ring the bell against me? My heart that is turned to a black coal within me. These feet that were washed by him! These lips that kissed him! A lone shadow! Yes, and a doleful shadow, a wretched ghost, beaten by the waves of the sea. It is all there before me—black, bitter waters—bitter, winter winds. Dogs tearing, hounds hunting, a rock frozen in the waves. A wave of ice and a wave of fire—that is the wages of the betrayal of the King!

St. Brigit: He is a King who will seek and save those that are lost.

Judas: I am going to that death and that punishment whatever it may be. And all I bring with me is the knowledge that he is the Christ that was promised to Israel, and it is little profit it will be to me, and it is hard I earned it! (*He snatches up the rope and rushes out.*)

Joel: That noosed rope is a fitting friend to him.

1*st Woman:* May God have mercy on him!

St. Brigit: He might find kindness yet for one good deed he did, laying a wide flagstone in a desolate boggy place, where it is a great comfort to them that pass the way.

3rd Soldier: (*coming back with pitcher*) Here is the vessel. It is full yet. When he had tasted of it he would not drink. He is a brave man. He would not shun any of the pain.

(*1st Woman takes it and he goes.*)

1st Woman: I could cry tears down to think of him bearing all that, and no one next or near to aid him.

St. Brigit: The people of Heaven are standing waiting for him. He has beside him the right hand angel of God.

(*A great shout and clamour is heard from the hill. Then silence. The day darkens.*)

1st Woman: There is coming a heavy mist.

3rd Woman: The song of the birds has stopped.

1st Woman: There is the blessed Mother coming down the hill.

St. Brigit: And with her the disciple that he loved.

(*She goes to meet them.*)

2nd Woman: She got her own scourge this day.

1st Woman: It's no wonder a broken heart to be with her. Let her keen him and cry her fill.

(*She chants, the others joining in the caoine.*)

O what is this woman crying,
Coming down from the hillside,
Och, och, agus, Och-uch-an!
"Go, call the three Maries,
Till they keen my white darling,
Och, Och, agus Ochone O!

"Where is my child that I carried
Through three-quarters of a year?
Och, och, agus, Och-uch-an!
Have you seen my bright darling,
That never angered his Mother?
Och, Och, agus Ochone O!"

We did see him, O poor Mother!
We saw your white darling,
Och, Och, agus Och-uch-an.
A tall young man on the hillside,
His enemies all around him
And He on the Tree of Passion.
Och, Och, agus, Ochone O!

[NOTE.—As to the verses given to the women, I wish them to be lilted rather than sung. For they have dramatic value, are a part of the play, and any musical setting, however beautiful, that is more complicated than that of the street ballad singer must delay the swift comprehension needed.]

CAOINE.

O what is this wo-man cry - ing, Com - ing down the hill - side?
Och, och ag - us och - one, Go call the three Mar - ies,
Till they keen my white dar - ling, Och, och ag - us och - one O.
Where is my child that I car - ried Through three quarters of the year?
Och, och ag - us och - one. Have you seen my white dar - ling That
nev - er an-gered his mo - ther? Och, och ag - us och - one O.
We did see him, O poor mo - ther, We saw your white dar - ling,
Och, och ag - us och - one, A tall young man on the hill-side, His en - e-mies all a -
round him and He on the tree of pas - sion. Och, och ag - us och - one, O.

Isn't it great the pity, the child she crooned in her arm,

Och, och agus ochone, the spear to be in his side, the dust to be on his head. Och, och, agus ochone, O.

(*There is another heavy shout from the hill. The darkness increases.*)

3*rd Woman:* Here she is coming to us. (*They kneel and continue the caoine.*)

Isn't it great the pity,
The Child she crooned in her arm,
Och, Och, agus, Och-uch-an!
The spear to be in his side,
The dust to be on his head!
Och, Och, agus Ochone-O!

(*As it ends, the Mother, St. John, and St. Brigit come on.*)

1*st Woman:* Och! He is surely gone from us!

St. John: "It is finished!" That is what he said. And then he said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." And with that the soul parted from the body.

(*He covers his face.*)

St. Brigit: He is gone from the shadows of the world to be with his Father in the Garden of Paradise.

Joel: My bitter blame upon the place where he died! I thought it had been he would have redeemed Israel!

St. Brigit: It is the whole of the Universe he has redeemed.

Joel: Dead or alive, he will always be my Master and my King!

1*st Woman:* There will be no candle wasted with him. It is the angels of God that will keep a watch over him.

(*The sky brightens. John is seen looking upwards.*)

St. John: Give over keening. Look at that brightness. Listen! Listen!

St. Brigit: It is like the far-off music of the Birds of the plains of Heaven.

St. John: Hush! He is speaking! (*He bends his head and listens intently.*)

2*nd Woman:* Oh! What word does he say!

St. John: (*still listening and speaking slowly*) "I am He that liveth and was dead. And behold I am alive for evermore!"

1*st Woman:* O King of Glory! He has broken before us the battle of death!

3*rd Woman:* Hush! Listen!

St John: "Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice and open the

door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

1st Woman: Oh ! Our white Lord !

St. John: (*holding up his hand for silence, and as if hearing with greater difficulty*) "To him that overcometh and keepeth my words to the end, will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God——and I will give him the Morning Star——"

St. Brigit: That God may bring us to the same joy his blessed soul returned to !

The Women: O Blessed Christ !

CURTAIN.

NOTES

THE STORY BROUGHT BY BRIGIT

was first produced at the Abbey Theatre in Holy Week, April, 1924, with the following cast:—

JOEL	Arthur Shields
DANIEL	Michael J. Dolan
MARCUS	Maurice Esmonde
SILAS	Barry Fitzgerald
PILATE	F. J. McCormick
JUDAS ISCARIOT	Eric Gorman
ST. JOHN	P. J. Carolan
ST. BRIGIT	Christine Hayden
FIRST WOMAN	Sara Allgood
SECOND WOMAN	Maureen Delaney
THIRD WOMAN	Eileen O'Kelly
FIRST MAN	Peter Nolan
SECOND MAN	Bernard Swan
FIRST SOLDIER	Gabriel J. Fallon
SECOND SOLDIER	F. J. McCormick
THIRD SOLDIER	Tony Quinn
A YOUNG SCRIBE	Gabriel J. Fallon
AN EGYPTIAN NURSE	May Craig
THE MOTHER	
THE CHRIST	

NOTES

Last year in looking through old letters I found one from W. B. Yeats, in which he said that Father Hegarty, a priest beloved by the people of Mayo, had said to Æ. that if a Passion play should be written (for we were then at the beginning of our dramatic movement) he would be glad to have it put on in his parish. Yeats had then, and later, urged me to work at this. But it was only last summer, when my life seemed to have drifted into a quiet backwater, and I was much alone, that the great subject took hold of me, and so filled my mind that I was forced to get it into words, and into the form I am most used to, of a play.

I knew I could best write it through the voice, as it were, of our own people, and so I have given the story as I think it might have been told by Brigit, "the Mary of the Gael," our great Saint, had she been present during the last days of Him who, tradition tells us, she cherished in his early days. Gaelic Scotland in its folklore makes her the serving maid at the Inn of Bethlehem; but in Ireland it brings the Holy Mother and Child to our own country. Brigit, "shining flame of gold, right foster-

mother of Christ,'' comes often into the hymns and incantations of the Scottish Highlands. '' The encompassment of Mary and of Brigit '' is asked on herds of cattle and on milking and on churning. She tended sheep, and her protection as '' Brigit the fostermother,'' is asked for the flocks, '' to keep them from strangers and from harm,'' and '' from the straight arrows of the women of the sidhe''—the fairy women. ''May gentle Mary keep the sheep, may calm Brigit keep them, on the soft land, on the hard land, from the fox and from the wolf.'' The two names are constantly put together, '' calm, generous Brigit,'' '' mild, loving Mary.'' And in the dedication, the binding, of the young hunter '' not to kill a bird sitting, or a beast lying down,'' he was bade remember '' the fairy swan of Brigit of the flocks ; the fairy duck of Mary of Peace.''

Here in Connacht on her day, the 1st of February, '' the blessed Crosses are made of straw, and are put up in the thatch, and the first of the birds begin to make their nests, for the death of the year is done with, and the birthday of the year is begun.''

It was a poor woman living on a slope of Slieve Echtge, who told me a while ago '' how Brigit helped the Mother of God.'' '' There was a poor man, and a poor woman, living in an ancient place

in Ireland, a sort of a wilderness. The man used to be wishing for a son that would be a help to him with the work, but the woman used to say nothing, because she was good. They had a baby at last, but it was a girl, and the man was sorry, and he said, 'We will always be poor, now.' But the woman said, for it was showed to her at that time, 'This child will be the Mother of God.' The girl grew up in that ancient place, and one day she was sitting at the door, and our Saviour sent One to her that said, 'Would you wish to be the Mother of God?' 'I would wish it,' said she. And on the minute, as she said that, the Saviour went into her as a child. The Messenger took her with him, and he put beautiful clothing on her, and she turned to be so beautiful that all the people followed them, crowding to see the two beautiful people passing by. They met with Brigit, and the Mother of God said to her, 'What can we do to make these crowds leave following us?' 'I will do that for you,' said Brigit, 'for I will show them a greater wonder.' She went into a house then, and brought out a harrow, and held it up over her head, and everyone of the pins gave out a flame like a candle; and all the people turned back to look at the shining harrow that was such a great wonder. And it is because of that, the harrow is blessèd since that time. The Mother of God asked her then what

would she do for her as a reward. ' Put my day before your own day,' said Brigit. So she did that, and Saint Brigit's day is kept before her own day ever since. And there are some say Brigit fostered the Holy Child, and kept an account of every drop of blood he lost through his lifetime. And anyway, she was always going about with the Mother of God."

As to the curse put upon Daniel in the play, I wondered sometimes why our country people who are so kind to one another, and to tramps and beggars, that they seem to live by the rule of that old woman in a Galway sweet shop, the mother of the great preacher, Father Burke, " Refuse not any, for one may be the Christ," shun as they do that wandering tribe, tinkers—as they call them, gipsies they may be—who spend their days going along the roads in carts, and sleep at night under their cart, or by the side of a wall. " Some of them that do smith's work are middling decent," I was told ; " but the most of them have no trade, but to be going to fairs and doing tricks, and having a table for getting money out of you with games." " They never go to Mass, they have no religion, or, if they have, it is a wandering one, wandering like themselves." " There was one I knew, I told him I wondered they wouldn't settle down in one place ; for if I knew the way to make money, I said,

I would make plenty. For they are said to coin money. But he said it made no difference if they had money ; they couldn't stop in one place ; they must be walking always, and going through the whole country.'' And then I was given a reason for this ceaseless wandering. '' There are some say that when our Lord was on the Cross there could be no tradesman found to drive the nails in his hands and feet till a tinker was brought, and he did it ; and that is why they have to walk the world. And I never met anyone that had seen a tinker's funeral.''

Other legends have gathered round that story of '' the Tree of Passion.'' One of the most ancient is of the death of Conochar, High King of Ireland in Cuchulain's time. '' He had been given at one time a wound in the head in some battle in Connacht. And the wound was sewn up by Fintan, the great healer, with a thread of gold that matched the colour of his hair. And Fintan bade him to be careful and not to give way to anger or to passion, and not to be running, or to go riding on a horse. So through seven years he stayed in his quietness until the coming of the Friday of the Crucifixion. And on that day he took notice of a change that came over the world, and of the darkening of the sun until the moon was seen at the full ; and he asked his druid that was with him the meaning of

that great change. 'It is Jesus Christ, the Son of God,' said the druid, 'that is at this time meeting with his death by the Jews.' 'It is a pity,' said Conochar, 'that he did not call out for the help of a High King. And that call would bring myself there,' he said, 'in the shape of a hardy fighter, my lips twitching, until the great courage of a champion would be heard breaking a gap of battle between two armies. It is with Christ my help would be; a wild shout going out; the keening of a full lord, a full loss. I would make my complaint to the trusty army of the high feats, their ready beautiful help would relieve him. Beautiful the overthrowing I would give his enemies; beautiful the fight I would make for Christ that is defouled; I would not rest although my own body was tormented. Why would we not cry after Christ, he that is killed in Armenia, he that is more worthy than any worthy king? I would go to death for his safety; it crushes my heart to hear the outcries and the lamentations!' And with that he took his sword and he rushed at an oakwood that was near at hand, and began to hack and to fell the tree; and it is what he said, that is the treatment he would give them. And from the greatness of the anger that gripped him, the old wound in his head burst open, and the ball started from it, and brought away the brain with it. And that is

the way Conochar, King of Ireland, met his death."

The caoine used by the three Women is a little altered from one given in the *Religious Songs of Connacht,* collected by Douglas Hyde. The notes to which it is spoken have been given to me by Miss Sara Allgood.

A. G.

Coole, *October* 16, 1923.

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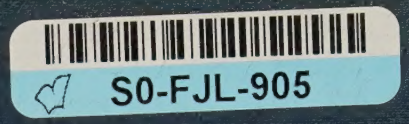
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